



A Profile of Small Farms in Florida and the United States

**Observations from the
2007 Census of Agriculture**



This document was prepared for distribution at the

***Florida Small Farms and Alternative Enterprises Conference
Kissimmee, Florida
August 1-2, 2009***

(All data are taken from the 2007 Census of Agriculture, conducted by the USDA/National Agricultural Statistics Service. The entire Census report is available from USDA/NASS at www.agcensus.usda.gov.)

In 1998, USDA defined a “small farm” as a farm with *annual gross sales less than \$250,000*. Using this definition, the following observations can be made regarding small farms in Florida:

- Most farms are “small farms”.
- Operators of small farms are more likely than operators of large farms to be full owners of their farms.
- The percentage of female operators is higher among small farms than among large farms.
- Operators of small farms are more likely than operators of large farms to have a primary occupation other than farming.
- Operators of small farms are more likely than operators of large farms to live on the farms they operate.
- Small farm operators use less hired labor than do large farm operators.
- The percentage of farms with organic production was virtually the same among small farms as among large farms.
- The percentage of operators age 55 and over is higher among small farm operators than among large farm operators.
- Operators of small farms have been on their present farm for less time than have large farm operators.
- The percentage of small farms varies significantly by type of farm.

Defining a “Small Farm”

In 1998, USDA defined a “small farm” as a farm with *annual gross sales less than \$250,000*. For the purpose of illustration in this document, “small farms” and “large farms” are further subdivided as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Subdivision of Small and Large Farms

Size of Farm	Subdivision	Market Value of Products Sold
Small	Very Small	Less than \$5,000
	Small	\$5,000 to \$249,999
Large	Large	\$250,000 to \$999,999
	Very Large	\$1,000,000 or more

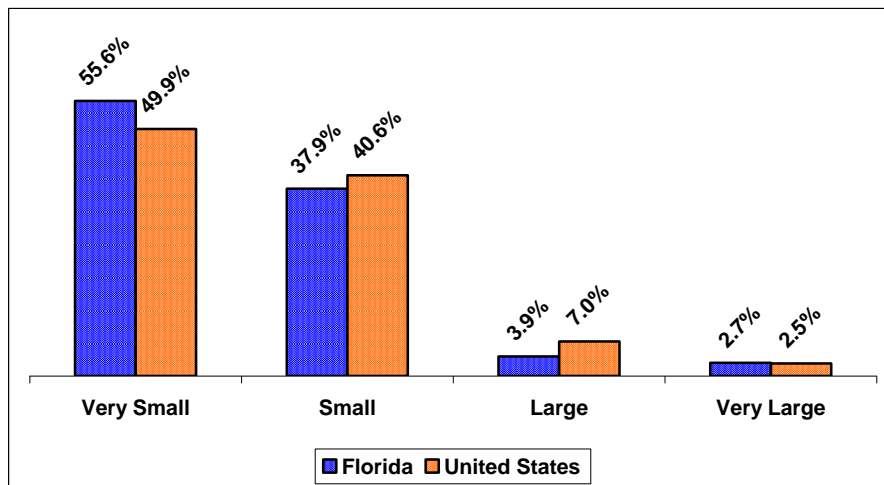
Distribution of Farms by Size

Table 2 and Figure 1 show that most farms in Florida and in the United States are “small farms”. Florida has a higher percentage of small and very small farms (93.4%) than the United States as a whole (90.5%).

Table 2: Number and Percent of Farms by Size

Size of Farm	Number of Farms		Percent of Farms	
	Florida	U.S.	Florida	U.S.
Very Small	26,368	1,100,629	55.6	49.9
Small	17,965	894,504	37.9	40.6
Large	1,862	154,150	3.9	7.0
Very Large	1,268	55,509	2.7	2.5
All Farms	47,463	2,204,792	100.0	100.0

Figure 1 – Distribution of Farms by Size



As one might expect, farm size based on value of sales (“economic size”) was highly correlated to farm size based on acreage (“physical size”). Table 3 shows the economic size distribution for 6 physical size categories. In Florida, 55.6% of all farms are “very small” (economic size), but among those farms with 2,000 or more acres, only 4.3% are “very small” (economic size).

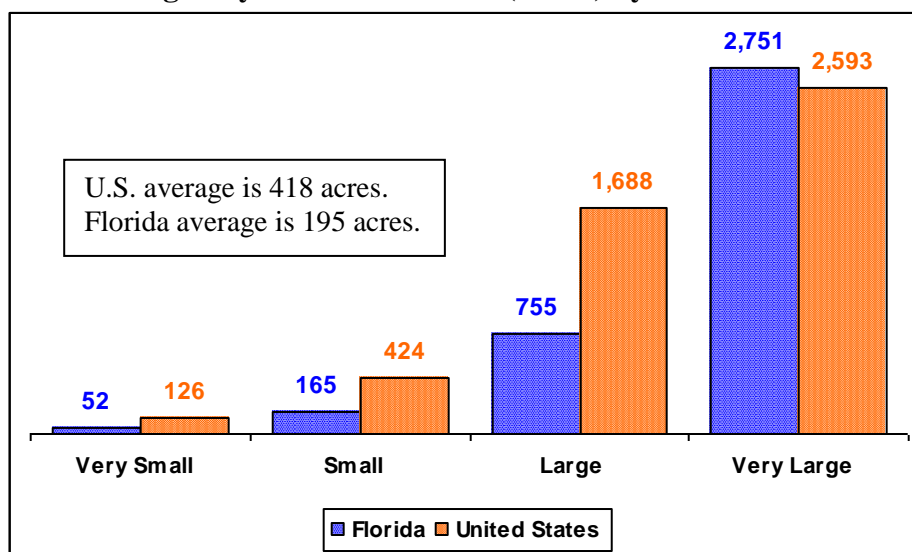
Figure 2 shows that in Florida, farms with annual sales less than \$5,000 (very small farms) averaged 52 acres, and farms with annual sales of \$1 million or more (very large farms) averaged 2,751 acres. Except for the very large farms (\$1 million or more in annual sales), the average farm size in the U.S. was significantly larger than the corresponding average farm size in Florida. Florida has a number of “specialty” commodities which can be produced on a relatively small acreage and generate the same volume of sales as larger farms in other States.

For example, there were 1,268 farms in Florida which had sales of \$1 million or more and 248 (19.6%) of those farms had less than 50 acres. By comparison, in the United States, the percentage of farms with \$1 million or more in sales which had less than 50 acres was only 11.0%.

Table 3: Number and Percent of Farms by Size, Florida

Physical Size (acres)	Number of Farms	Percent of All Farms	Percentage of Farms by Physical Size			
			Very Small	Small	Large	Very Large
1 to 9	12,184	25.7	59.4	38.9	1.5	0.3
10 to 49	20,680	43.6	66.0	31.0	2.0	1.0
50 to 99	4,968	10.5	51.4	42.5	3.8	2.3
100 to 499	7,036	14.8	37.3	50.4	8.1	4.2
500 to 999	1,225	2.6	17.6	52.7	15.4	14.3
1,000 to 1,999	653	1.4	10.3	45.5	20.4	23.9
2,000 or more	717	1.5	4.3	31.2	25.8	38.6
All Farms	47,463	100.0	55.6	37.9	3.9	2.7

Figure 2 – Average Physical Size of Farm (Acres) by Economic Size of Farm



Ownership Status of Principal Operators

In the Census of agriculture, principal operators were asked to report their “tenure” or “ownership status” - full owner, part owner, or tenant. Table 4 and Figures 3 and 4 show that in Florida, the percentage of operators who are full owners was higher for small and very small farms than for large and very large farms. Conversely, the percentage of part owners was higher for large and very large farms than for smaller farms.

Table 4: Ownership Status by Size of Farm, Florida and U.S.

Size of Farm	Florida			United States		
	Full Owners	Part Owners	Tenants	Full Owners	Part Owners	Tenants
Very Small	89	9	2	87	10	4
Small	79	17	4	57	34	9
Large	68	24	8	25	64	11
Very Large	62	29	9	35	55	11
All Farms	84	13	4	69	25	6

Figure 3 – Percentage of Full Owners by Size of Farm

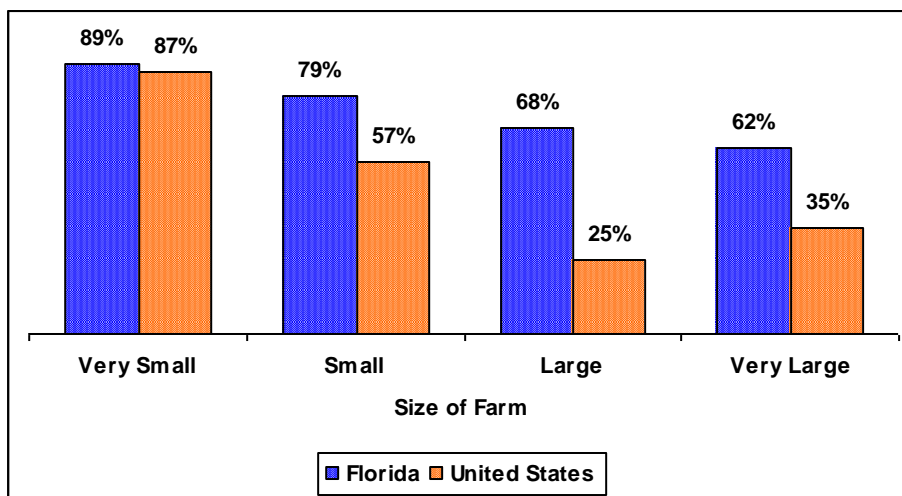
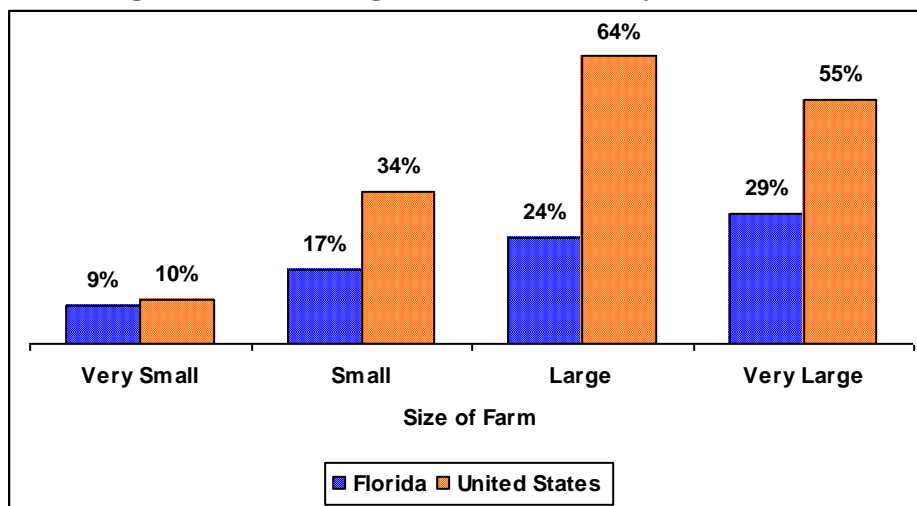


Figure 4 – Percentage of Part Owners by Size of Farm



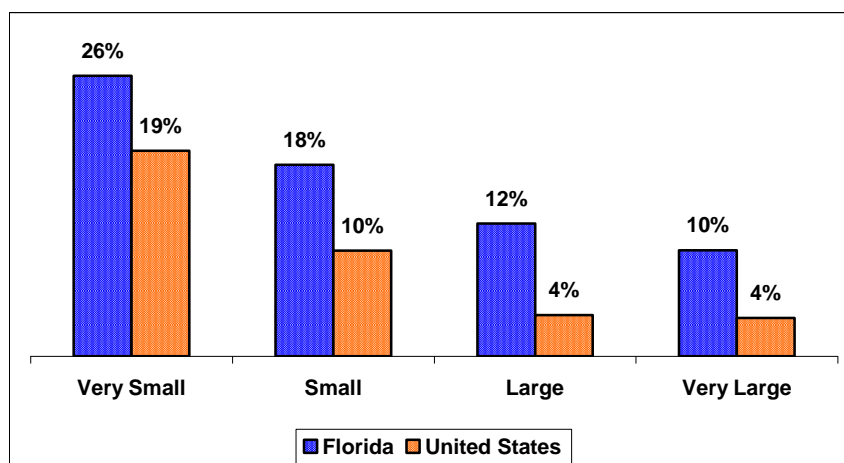
Gender of Principal Operators

Of the 47,463 farms in Florida, 78% were operated by men and 22% were operated by women. However, the percentage of farms operated by women was very different for small farms than for large farms. Among small and very small farms, 23% were operated by women, while among large and very large farms, only 11% were operated by women. In the United States, 15% of small and very small farms were operated by women, but only 4% of large and very large farms were operated by women.

Table 5: Percentage of Operators by Gender

Size of Farm	Florida		United States	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Very Small	74	26	81	19
Small	82	18	90	10
Large	88	12	96	4
Very Large	90	10	96	4
All Farms	78	22	86	14

Figure 5 – Percentage of Female Operators by Size of Farm

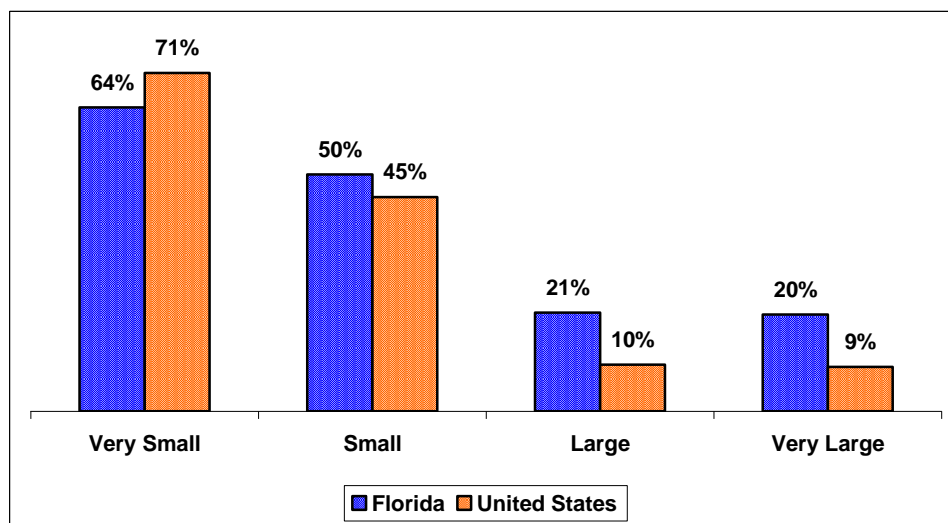


Primary Occupation of Principal Operators

Principal farm operators in the Census of Agriculture were asked to report whether their primary occupation was farming or something other than farming. Operators of small farms were more likely than operators of large farms to have a primary occupation other than farming. In Florida, 58% of farm operators of small and very small farms reported a primary occupation other than farming, but among large and very large farms the percentage was only 21%. In the United States, 59% of farm operators of small and very small farms reported a primary occupation other than farming, but among operators of large and very large farms the percentage was only 10%.

Table 6: Percentage of Operators by Primary Occupation

Size of Farm	Florida		United States	
	Farming	Other	Farming	Other
Very Small	36	64	29	71
Small	50	50	55	45
Large	79	21	90	10
Very Large	80	20	91	9
All Farms	44	56	45	55

Figure 6 – Percentage of Operators with Primary Occupation Other Than Farming

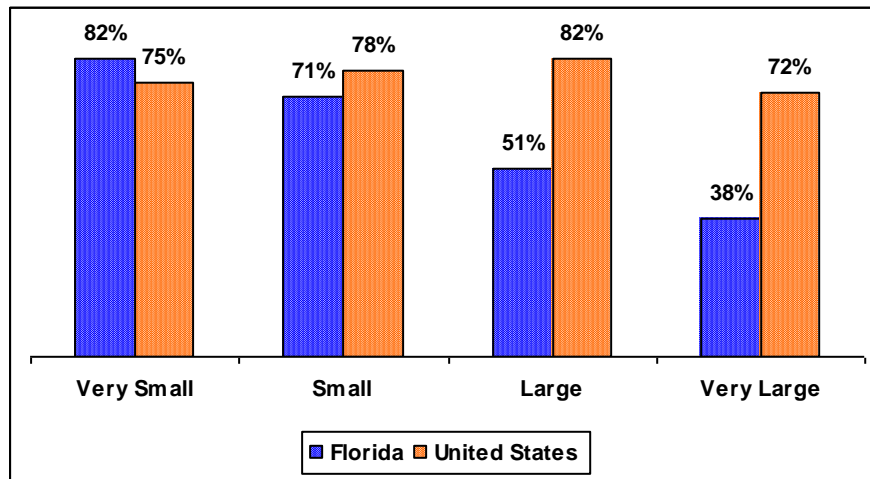
Residence of Principal Operators

Principal farm operators in the Census of Agriculture were asked to report whether or not they lived on the farm they operate. In Florida, the percentage living on the farm was higher for operators of small and very small farms (78%) than for operators of large and very large farms (46%). In the United States, however, there was very little difference between operators of small farms (77%) and operators of large farms (79%).

Table 7: Percentage of Operators by Location of Residence

Size of Farm	Florida		United States	
	On Farm	Off Farm	On Farm	Off Farm
Very Small	82	18	75	25
Small	71	29	78	22
Large	51	49	82	18
Very Large	38	62	72	28
All Farms	75	25	77	23

Figure 7 – Percentage of Operators Living On Their Farm



Hired Farm Labor

The percentage farms using hired labor was considerably less among small and very small farms than among large and very large farms, both in Florida and in the United States. Among farms in Florida with hired labor, small and very small farms hired an average of 3.4 workers, and large and very large farms hired an average of 37.5 workers. Very large farms hired an average of 70.0 workers.

Table 8: Farms With Hired Labor and Average Number of Workers

Size of Farm	Florida		United States	
	Percent of Farms With Hired Labor	Average Number of Hired Workers	Percent of Farms With Hired Labor	Average Number of Hired Workers
Very Small	10	2.4	9	2.4
Small	28	3.9	27	3.3
Large	68	9.6	63	5.5
Very Large	86	70.0	81	23.8
All Farms	21%	11.4	22%	5.5

Figure 8 – Percentage of Farms With Hired Labor

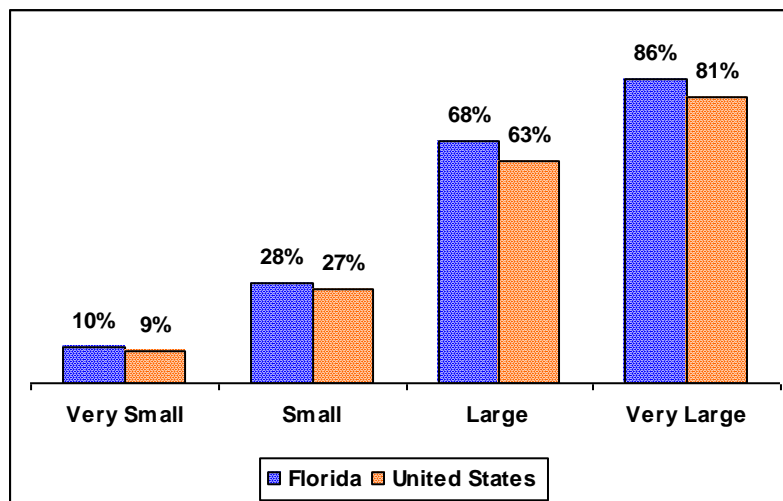
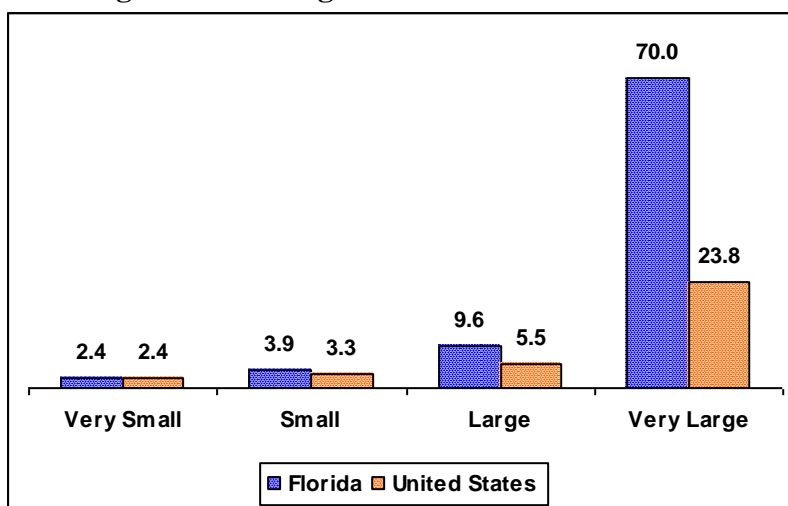


Figure 9 – Average Number of Hired Workers



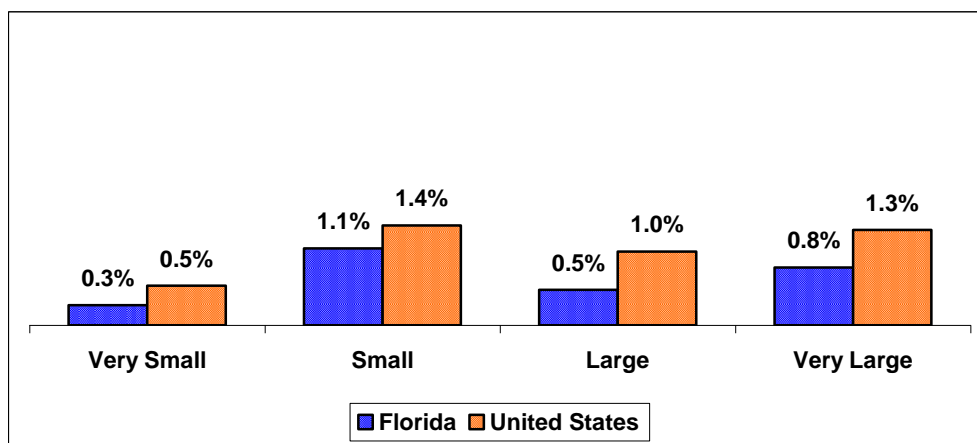
Organic Production

Table 9 and Figure 10 show the percentage of farms in Florida and the United States reporting organic production by size of farm. Most farms with organic production were small or very small. Less than 1% of all farms in both Florida and the U.S. reported some organic production.

Table 9: Farms Reporting Organic Production

Size of Farm	Florida		United States	
	Number	Percent of Farms	Number	Percent of Farms
Very Small	72	0.3%	5,961	0.5%
Small	189	1.1%	12,199	1.4%
Large	9	0.5%	1,554	1.0%
Very Large	10	0.8%	723	1.3%
All Farms	280	0.6%	20,437	0.9%

Figure 10 – Percentage of Farms With Organic Production



Age of Principal Operators

Table 10 and Figures 11 and 12 show there was a higher percentage of operators age 55 and over among small farms than among large farms, both in Florida and in the United States, but that the percentage of operators under age 35 was virtually the same for small farms as for large farms.

Table 10: Percent of Operators Under Age 35 and Age 55 And Over

Size of Farm	Florida		United States	
	Under Age 35	Age 55 and Over	Under Age 35	Age 55 and Over
Very Small	3.3	59.2	4.6	57.7
Small	3.7	63.1	6.2	58.4
Large	3.0	52.7	6.2	46.0
Very Large	2.7	50.8	5.0	43.6
All Farms	3.4	60.2	5.4	56.8

Figure 11 – Percentage of Operators Under Age 35

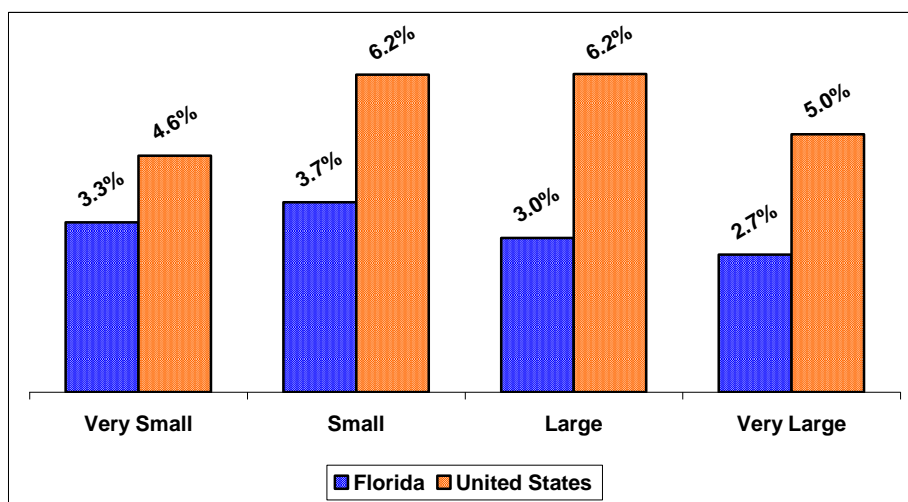
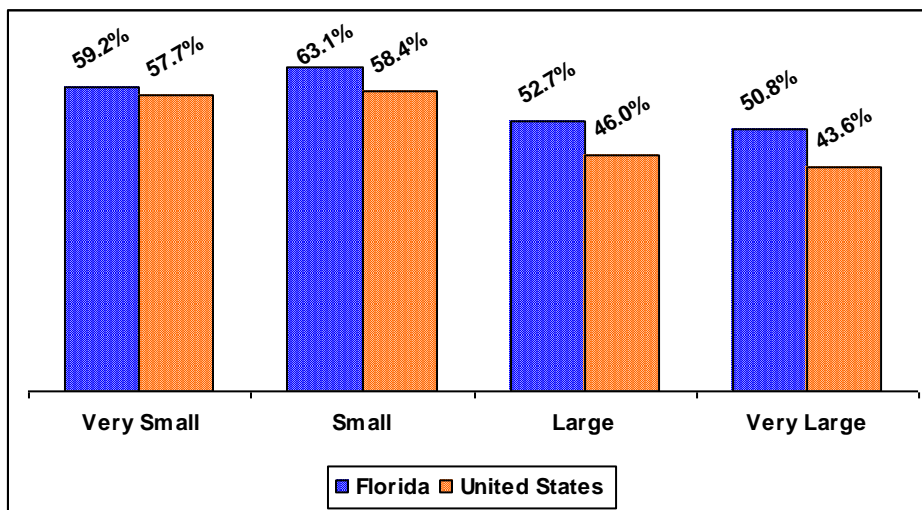


Figure 12 – Percentage of Operators Age 55 And Over



Tenure of Principal Operators

Table 11 shows that operators of small and very small farms had been on their present farm for an average of less than 20 years, while operators of large and very large farms had been on their present farm for an average of 22 years or more. The percentage of operators who had been on their present farm for 10 years or more was lower for small farms than for large farms.

Table 11: Years on Present Farm

Size of Farm	Florida		United States	
	Average Years on Present Farm	Percent on Farm 10 Years or More	Average Years on Present Farm	Percent on Farm 10 Years or More
Very Small	16.2	61	18.7	67
Small	19.5	70	23.9	78
Large	22.0	81	27.3	89
Very Large	23.4	85	23.4	85
All Farms	17.9	66	21.6	73

Figure 13 – Average Years Operator Has Been on Present Farm

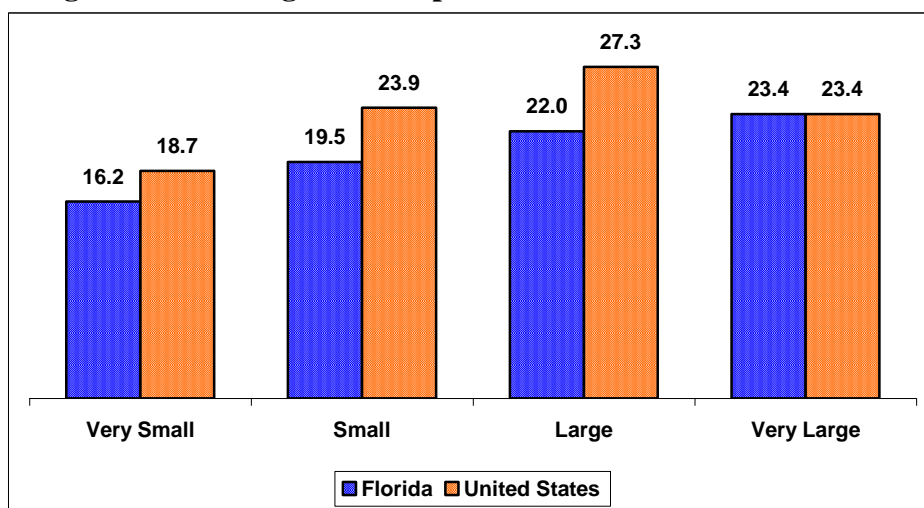
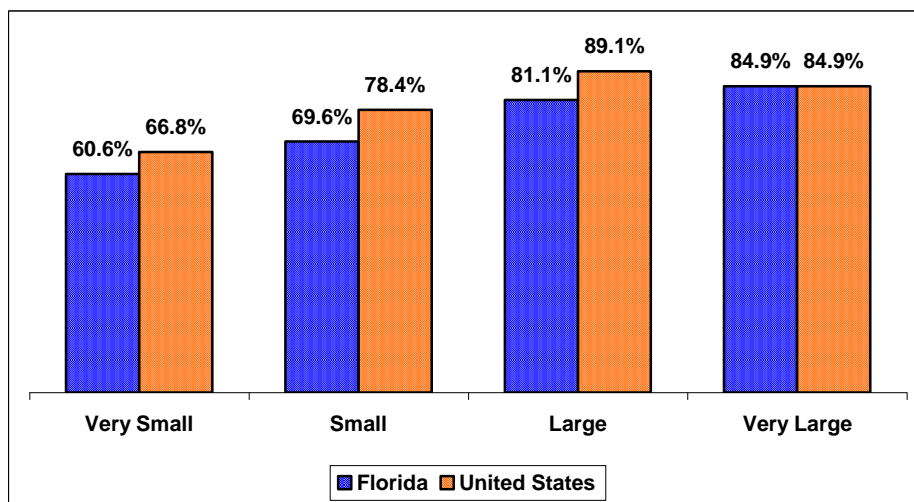


Figure 14 – Percentage of Operators On Present Farm 10 Years or More



Type of Farm

The Census of Agriculture categorized each farm according to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). Categories included: Oilseeds & Grains; Vegetables & Melons; Fruit & Tree Nuts; Greenhouse, Nursery & Floriculture; Beef Cattle; Dairy; etc. Table 12 shows the percentage of farms in Florida for several NAICS categories. For example, 35.4% of all farms in Florida were categorized as “Beef Cattle” operations, 18% were categorized as “Animal Aquaculture & Other Animal Production” operations, etc.

Table 12 also shows the percentage of farms in each NAICS category by size of farm. For example, 67.1% of all “Beef Cattle” operations in Florida were “very small” and 31.5% were small. A very small percentage of “Beef Cattle” operations were categorized as “large” or “very large”. The table (and Figures 15-18) show differences in the distribution of size of farm depending on the category of farm. For example, 55.6% of all Florida farms are very small, but 95.9% of all sheep and goat farms are very small, and only 2.7% of all Florida farms are very large, but 17.7% of all vegetable and melon farms are very large.

Table 11: Distribution of Size of Farms by NAICS Category, Florida

NAICS Category	Percent of All Farms	Percent of NAICS Category			
		Very Small	Small	Large	Very Large
Beef Cattle	35.4	67.1	31.5	1.2	0.2
Animal Aquaculture & Other Animal Production	18.0	74.6	23.1	1.7	0.6
Fruit & Tree Nuts	17.7	18.8	70.2	7.0	3.9
Greenhouse, Nursery, Floriculture	9.5	15.9	62.2	12.2	9.7
Sugarcane, Hay, Other Crops	9.1	74.1	21.7	3.0	1.2
Sheep & Goats	2.7	95.9	4.1	0.0	0.0
Poultry & Eggs	2.5	79.5	6.5	8.1	5.9
Vegetables & Melons	2.3	16.2	57.6	8.5	17.7
All Farms	100.0	55.6	37.9	3.9	2.7

Figure 15 – Percentage of “Very Small” Farms by NAICS Category, Florida

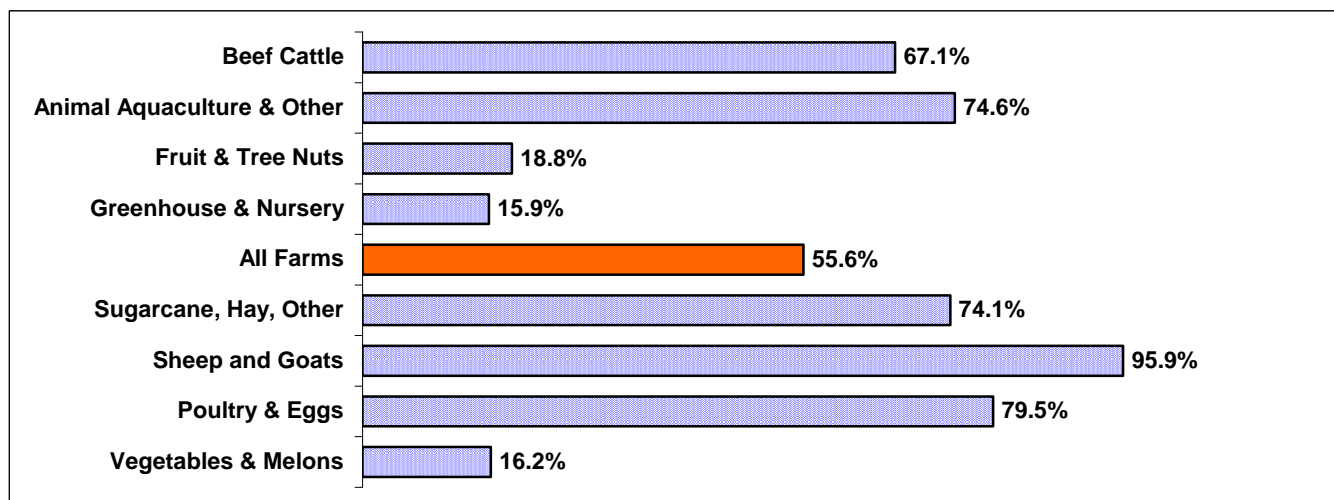


Figure 16 – Percentage of “Small” Farms by NAICS Category, Florida

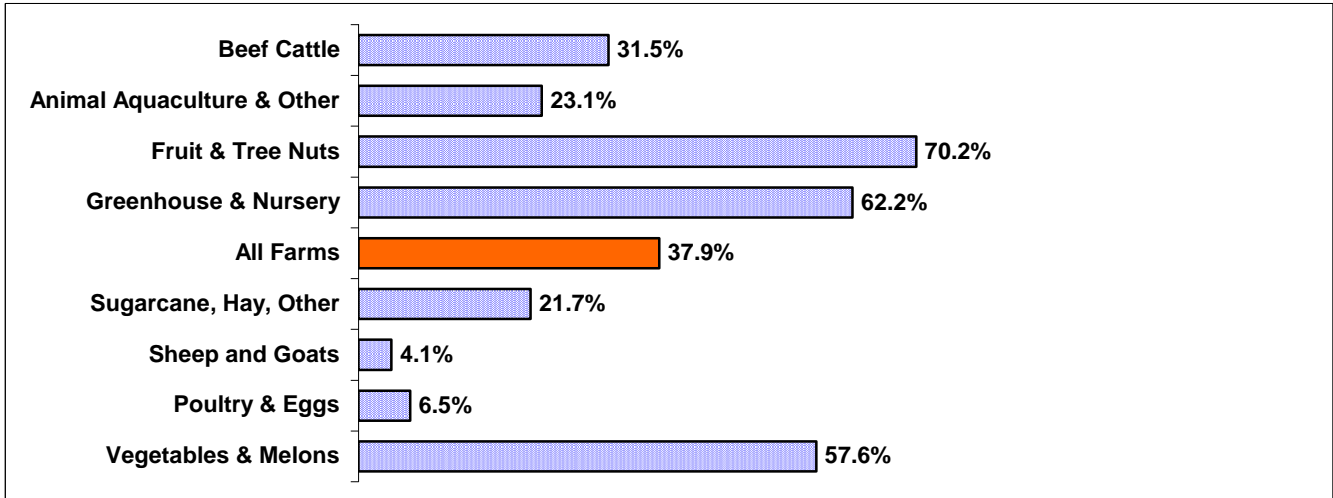


Figure 17 – Percentage of “Large” Farms by NAICS Category, Florida

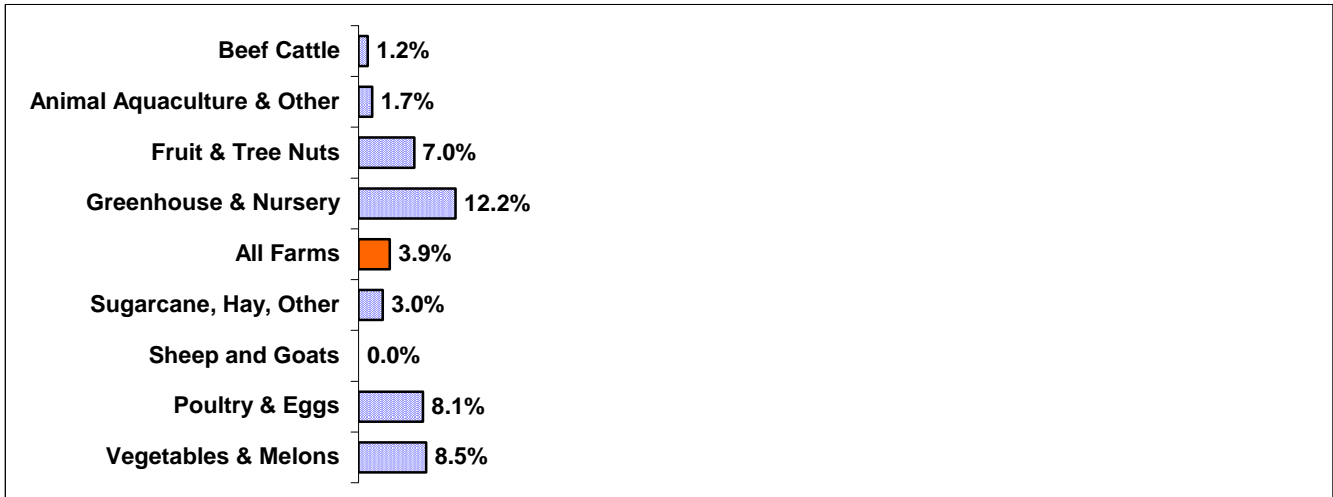


Figure 18 – Percentage of “Very Large” Farms by NAICS Category, Florida

